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Kathryn Whitney/Daily News photo

DO THE RIGHT THING — Writer-in-residence Frances Lefkowitz helps fourth-grader Christopher Toner with a poetry exercise Wednesday at the Coggeshall School. Lefkowitz works with students in class and in studio sessions at the school.

Writer-in-residence sparks imaginations at Coggeshall

RISCA

By James J. Gillis
Daily News staff

NEWPORT — For an hour Wednesday, Frances Lefkowitz drilled fourth-graders in the art of deception.

Lefkowitz — a writer-in-residence at Coggeshall School — did not advocate all-out lying. She just wanted students to write apologies tinted with a hint of insincerity.

"I want you to sound like your sorry, even though you're

really not," Lefkowitz told the children.

The example Lefkowitz gave the students was a poem called "This Is Just To Say" by William Carlos Williams: "I have eaten the plums that were in the icebox; And which you were probably saving for breakfast; Forgive me, they were so delicious, so sweet and so cold."

The students grasped this concept very quickly.

Apologies were offered for a

host of transgressions — real and imagined.

One girl wrote that she was sorry for leaving someone's wig on the fire place and burning it, but said it was actually funny. Another apologized for messing up her sister's room but admitted it was fun. "Have fun cleaning it up," she wrote.

A couple wrote to teacher Kathleen Leys and apologized

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for not doing homework but told how much fun it was to watch TV and eat popcorn instead. Some veered into strange territory. One boy addressed his to an alien, another talked about flushing a sibling's hamster down the toilet.

Lefkowitz said her goal is to teach the children to express themselves and use some imagination. The kids carry journals and fill them with their thoughts and assignments.

things you say. The real fun for me is their openness."

Lefkowitz, who lives in West Warwick, is a short story writer and a freelance independent filmmaker, with some feature films and commercial work to her credit. Her stories have been published in small literary publications. She has also worked in writing workshops for children but the Coggeshall stay was her first school residency.

A San Francisco native, Lefkowitz came to Rhode Island to study anthropology at Brown

9-to-5 jobs. I worked in a lab at Brown for two years after college. But I need the time to do my art projects."

The children respond well to Lefkowitz. Some eagerly read their works, while she had to prod others. Some just let Lefkowitz read them.

Coggeshall Principal Katherine Cipala said she is happy with Lefkowitz's work. The school paid \$1,850 for her services, \$950 from a grant from the Rhode Island Council on the Arts, with the Coggeshall School PTA fund-

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